

Water the Roots 6

The Capsule Sadhana

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
The Third Generation



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

The Capsule Sadhana

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The Third Generation



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

The Capsule Sadhana

The purpose of yoga for most of us today is to be able to manage the subtle aspects of the mind, to be able to maintain our balance, peace and creativity in the midst of the fast and demanding twenty-first century.

The capsule sadhana comes in small packages or capsules that we can practise throughout the day. This has two benefits: firstly, a sadhana becomes possible and can be done realistically by busy people. Secondly, our practice is integrated into the whole day, it is infusing yoga into our life, and we live a yogic lifestyle.

It is a sadhana unique to the Bihar Yoga tradition, incorporating the teachings of paramguru Swami Sivananda, our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, and adapted by Swami Niranjanananda so that we can employ its inspiration in meeting the challenges and joys of life today. It begins each day as soon as we wake up, before we move completely from the deeper states of consciousness to the extroverted, conscious state that we use in daily life.



CAPSULE SADHANA – MANTRA

Three mantras are beneficial for all aspects of life: the Mahamrityunjaya mantra for health and wellbeing, the Gayatri mantra for mental tranquillity and wisdom, and the 32 Names of Durga for overcoming difficulties and obstacles in life. The mantras should be repeated in this order, in the morning when you wake up, if possible before even getting out of bed. The first two should be repeated eleven times each and the third mantra is to be repeated three times. They can be chanted out loud, whispered to yourself or repeated mentally, according to circumstances, but they should be chanted as soon as you wake up, during the peaceful time before the thoughts start coming.

As you chant the mantras eleven times, develop the thought of wellbeing in your mind. During the chanting of the Mahamrityunjaya mantra, the thought of wellbeing must be there for yourself and those you consider to be your family, this is the *sankalpa*, the resolve, to focus your mind on. This is followed by the Gayatri mantra, eleven times. During the chanting of the Gayatri mantra, the focus should be on understanding and acquisition of wisdom.

The longer mantra, made up of 32 Names of Durga, is chanted three times to overcome difficulties in your life, or to help others overcome difficulties and to learn the difficult lessons that life teaches you.

I have recommended that these three mantras be done first thing in the morning on waking, when the mind is at peace with itself. In this way, the mantras become the first input – a positive input, a positive resolution – that you are giving to your mind in the morning. When the mind is quiet, peaceful and not extroverted, the mantras go deep into the subconscious and create a positive *sankalpa* or resolution which helps you attain inner mental wellbeing.

The chanting of these three mantras must happen first thing in the morning in order to create protection and immunity at physical and psychological levels. These mantras will have

much less effect if chanted after one hour of waking up, when all one's frequencies are tuned to the outer stations. When waking up in the morning, before one starts thinking and moving, there are no distractions, and therefore, the effect is tenfold.

These three mantras should become part of the daily waking-up process of every person. Wellbeing is the birthright of everyone, and definitely whatever gives one physical and psychological wellbeing should be adopted to improve the quality of our lives.



Mahamrityunjaya mantra

Om tryambakaṃ yajāmahe sugandhiṃ puṣṭivardhanam.
Urvārukamiva bandhanāt mṛtyormukṣīya māmṛtāt.

The first mantra is the Mahamrityunjaya mantra, for the wellbeing of the body, senses and personality. It increases vitality, the vital force, the *prana shakti*, and creates physical immunity to stressors in life.

Traditionally, the Mahamrityunjaya mantra is seen as the mantra of healing. It heals the body, the mind and emotions. It is a mantra which activates the *manipura chakra*, the navel chakra, the centre of pranic energy. With the activation of the pranas, the body is revitalized and the stresses of the body are removed. When stresses accumulate in



the body, stresses accumulate in the mind and in the emotional personality, and the sense of inner harmony, balance and peace is lost. The chanting of the mantras in the morning helps to bring together and awaken the pranic energy. The unified pranas heal the body, the mind and the whole person.

Gayatri mantra

Om bhūrbhuvahḥ svaḥ tatsaviturvareṇyam.
Bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo naḥ prachodayāt.

The second mantra is the Gayatri mantra, which awakens the centre of wisdom. The Gayatri mantra is useful for



the human brain as it balances both the hemispheres. It is for obtaining clarity of mind, getting rid of mental confusion and conflict and attaining wisdom. The second mantra relates to ajna chakra and stops the agitations of obsessive thinking and behaviour. It encourages the emergence of a clear and balanced

awareness, perception and consciousness, and shields the mind from the negative influences of stress. The Gayatri mantra awakens intuition and the faculty of understanding. It allows one to express wisdom.

32 Names of Durga

Om durgā durgārtīśamanī durgāpadvinivāriṇī.
Durgamachchhedinī durgasādhinī durganāśinī.
Durgatoddhāriṇī durganihantrī durgamāpahā.
Durgamajñānadā durga daityalokadavānalā.
Durgamā durgamālokā durgamātmāsvarūpiṇī.
Durgamārgapradā durgamavidyā durgamāśritā.
Durgamajñānasamsthānā durgamadyānabhāsinī.
Durgamohā durgamagā durgamārthasvarūpiṇī.
Durgamāsurasamhantrī durgamāyudhadhāriṇī.
Durgamāṅgī durgamatā durgamyā durgameśvarī.
Durgabhīmā durgabhāmā durgabhā durgadāriṇī.

The third mantra is the 32 Names of Durga. It is the latest addition to this sadhana, geared for challenging times. It is to be repeated three times. This is the mantra of protection which enables us to overcome the difficulties of life and to learn life's difficult lessons and benefit from them. It gives the power to uplift the downtrodden and express the inner light even in moments of deepest darkness. Chanted each morning it gives us courage and discrimination for each day. The Durga mantras are hard-hitting mantras, as they all start with '*Durga, Durga, Durga*', but they will remove the stress from life.



Three mantras

These are three important mantras to manage the ill effects of stress and provide immunity from stress. The first mantra shields the body, the second shields the mind, the third, the Durga mantra, shields life.

CAPSULE SADHANA – ASANA

Next, before breakfast, after the morning routine, you do your asana and pranayama. Then you go to work, live a normal life until the evening.

For a normal healthy person only a few asanas are important. The first one is *tadasana*, the palm tree pose. Tadasana is a practice in which the compressions and the pressure of the bones and spine are released; it is a practice of traction. Sitting down on a chair, at the work place or at home, you are constantly in a forward bending posture. There is constant pressure on the spine, compression of the spinal vertebrae. The body is actually folded and with extended sitting problems in the lower back can occur. Due to lack of exercise and movement, the lower back is generally weak. Therefore, to release the compression from different joints, *tadasana* is to be practised.

The second asana is *tiryak tadasana*, the palm tree swaying in the wind. This is another important posture, simple, yet effective. On one side a lateral stretch is taking place, and on the other side compression; this extension and compression releases the tensions from the sides of the body. If you observe your movements during the day you will find that you use these sides of the body very little in day-to-day activities. This practice is good to realign the spine.

The third asana is *kati chakrasana*, twisting the body; it beneficially squeezes the organs of the body. When you have washed a cloth, in order to remove the water, what do you do? You wring it, the same thing is happening with the whole body in this practice. It ensures proper circulation of blood to each and every organ, to each and every muscle, to each and every joint.

The fourth practice is *surya namaskara*, the salute to the sun, in which the major movements are forward and backward bends.

These four practices cover five different movements: traction, lateral stretch, twist, forward and backward bending. After this only one more asana needs to be practised, an asana



of inversion to reverse the force of gravity in the body. All the time we are standing up, or sitting up, gravity is pulling blood and energy down into the legs, so an inverted posture is important.

However, inverted postures are slightly more complex than the ones you have seen up to now. Those who can should practise headstand, those who cannot practise headstand should practice *vipareeta karani asana*, the half shoulder stand, or *sarvangasana*, the shoulder stand. However, inverted postures should not be practised by people who have blood pressure problems, weak bones, weak muscles of the neck, or heart problems. It is for this reason that these practices of yoga are for healthy people even though they may look simple and everyone may think, 'Oh I can do that easily.' These are the only five asanas necessary to include in your daily routine.

CAPSULE SADHANA – PRANAYAMA

After the five asanas are completed, two pranayamas are important for you in your normal life. The first is *nadi shodhana pranayama*, the alternate nostril breathing or the nerve purification pranayama. This pranayama is an effective practice to balance the nervous activities. It brings about a balance in the functions of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. There is greater harmony between the motor and sensory activities, the pranic channels are cleansed allowing pranic energy to flow through the channels with more ease.

The second practice is *bhramari pranayama*, the humming bee breath. This pranayama creates a particular frequency of vibration inside the brain which releases agitations: cerebral

agitations, nervous agitations, hormonal agitations. You move into a space of tranquillity, peace and contentment and become the master of your body, your life, yourself and your destiny. These are the only two pranayamas required for a healthy person to practise in daily life.



The entire sadhana of asana and pranayama takes about twenty to thirty minutes. If you can't fit in the pranayama before breakfast, then do it just before lunch when the stomach is empty. It takes ten minutes.

CAPSULE SADHANA – YOGA NIDRA

During the afternoon when you feel tired, when you feel stressed out, when you feel loss of energy, practise the

short form of yoga nidra. It is particularly helpful when you have to change from one activity to another type of activity. For example, practise it as soon as you come home from work, so that you are refreshed and open to the various interactions that take place with the family.

Yoga nidra was distilled from the scriptures and from his own experience by our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda. The short capsule form is simply adapted for life today when people have to cope with a busy schedule. With the rotation of awareness through the different body parts, followed by breath awareness and refreshing of your sankalpa, resolve, you will find that just this simple practice will give you a lot of relaxation and energy to continue through the day.



CAPSULE SADHANA – REVIEW OF THE DAY

At night before you sleep, keep ten minutes for yourself and that is exclusively for your mental and spiritual development. In twenty-four hours, give twenty-three hours and fifty minutes to the world, the family and society, and give ten minutes to yourself. You have twenty-three hours and fifty minutes to enjoy life in all its glory and beauty. The spice of frustration and fights, the salt of expectations and desires – mix them well during the day and enjoy your food. However, during these ten minutes before sleep, you don't identify either with your body or mind, but you witness all that has happened throughout the day as though you were watching a movie.



Go about your evening business. At night, when you are ready to go to sleep, just practise a short meditation of ten minutes to connect with your inner values, your inner strengths, the inner peace. Put aside the problems of the household and profession and be at peace with yourself.

Weekly schedule

In this way, we can gradually incorporate small routines and disciplines of yoga in our normal daily routines. Before thinking, ten minutes of mantra sadhana; morning time twenty minutes to thirty minutes of asana and pranyama; afternoon, fifteen minutes of yoga nidra; and in the evening, ten minutes for the Review of the Day meditation. You do this Monday to Friday.

On Saturday, you do something different. Practise *neti*, nasal cleansing, or some other cleansing practice. Do different meditations, like ajapa japa, antar mouna or trataka, or your *swadhyaya*, your self-study, using the SWAN technique. That should be done once a week or once a month. You can also

update your spiritual diary on your progress and the next necessary steps. Saturday is nothing but neti and swadhyaya, or meditation, and Saturday evening if you are inclined, include the chanting of the Mahamrityunjaya mantra 108 times.

As a routine we practise the Mahamrityunjaya mantra every Saturday evening in our ashrams with a sankalpa, a resolve or feeling, to let the healing powers of this mantra heal our body and the bodies of those who are suffering or in pain. If we want to incorporate the practice of mantra into our routine in order to help others, we should make the effort to chant the Mahamrityunjaya mantra. Every Saturday you can do one mala as it only takes about thirty-five minutes. This is for your personal wellbeing and for the wellbeing of everyone around you. On Sunday, take rest. This is the yoga capsule.

Yogic lifestyle – keeping it all together

The yoga capsule sadhana which I have outlined helps to incorporate yoga in our lifestyle and create a positive and uplifting environment at home. In this way, we are able to live, we are able to love and we are able to laugh. Living, loving and laughing is the aim of yoga, not samadhi. Don't aspire for samadhi, don't aspire for illumination, at least our tradition does not believe in that. Our tradition believes in excelling in what we do. That is real spiritual life; realization is a distant reality, far away from us.

However, the yogic lifestyle is relevant to all of us – to improve the quality of life, improve the efficiency of mind, heighten creativity and performance, harmonize the emotions and awaken the spirit. In this process of yoga we have to learn to become gardeners.

A gardener often keeps a notebook, in which the times of the moon may be noted, the times of the last good rains, the times when seeds were planted. What good results came from one plant, what type of pest attacked another, what defence was used, what compost was applied. Similarly, to have a sense of direction and give a broader perspective to our experiences, a spiritual diary can be most helpful. Our paramguru, Swami

Sivananda, introduced this tool, and we can use it as an ongoing inspiration as we practise sadhana to manage the mind and attain higher states of consciousness.

The basic method can be learned from Swami Sivananda's description. Then, you adapt it to your new sadhana, you include the insights that you gain from the daily Review of the Day meditation and from your weekly or monthly SWAN sadhana. You can use it to help form the necessary sankalpas for the three morning mantras or to form your ongoing sankalpa for yoga nidra once your present one is fulfilled.

Visit your ashram

There is another capsule particularly for those who have taken initiation. When the body becomes very tired, doctors advise an injection of Vitamin B-complex. I am not asking you to take those injections, but just as you would take injections to again recoup and regain your strength and stamina in conditions of extreme exhaustion and tiredness, once a year you should go to an ashram and live the life in the ashram in a simple manner.

Change the environment from home to ashram. Change your attitudes which are different at home and different in the ashram, change the work, change the routine, change the association, which is different at home and different at the ashram. You will find that you are recharging your batteries. Whenever the batteries are flat, go to recharge them in the ashram and just one week of association with the ashram will bring a qualitative change in your lifestyle.

That is the second course of capsules that you need to have at least once a year. If you can maintain this discipline in your life for some time, for some years while you are following your other interests, yoga will not remain only a practice, you will be able to change your attitude from practice to sadhana. You will begin to experience the benefits of yoga in your life and yoga will become part of your life.

Don't just practise yoga, but try to follow the aims set by the yoga tradition, and you will experience them. You are free



to follow the mind, there is no stopping it, but as a direction, a focus, an aspiration of your life you should have a sadhana, a yogic goal towards which you are walking. These yogic goals are very clear and defined.

Cultivation of awareness, disciplining and restructuring the personality, managing the mental and emotional distractions

and disturbances and becoming the observer of one's life and actions are the initial aims of yoga. When you have this as the focus and you are striving to achieve it, that is yoga sadhana. When you integrate different yoga practices to aid the development of potentials in your life, it becomes a yogic lifestyle.

In this way, you receive a lot of joy from life, you keep moving and learning, and the pure water of awareness penetrates to the roots of your being. Come to the ashram from time to time to share your experiences and keep abreast of what is happening.

As Swami Satyananda says in blessing, "Keep moving!"

Hari Om Tat Sat





Published by Yoga Publications Trust
© Bihar School of Yoga 2013
Reprinted 2014